



BHĀGAVATA PRADĪPIKĀ

Bask in the Illumination of the Bhāgavatam

A Monthly E-Magazine from the Bhaktivedanta Vidyapitha with Illuminating Perspectives on the Srimad-Bhagavatam

Dedicated to His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmi Prabhupāda,
Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

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**Who is the CAUSE
of my SUFFERING?**



WHO IS THE CAUSE OF MY SUFFERING?



It's a liberating experience to stop shifting blame and accept responsibility with tolerance, forgiveness, gratitude and dependence on God's will.

How Can I Suffer?

Endeavouring for happiness and attempting to avoid suffering are natural. Often times, however, we don't get happiness as we expect and we can't escape suffering despite our determined efforts. When one's seamless plans lead to tragic results, when one's good deeds with integrity end up in tremendous tribulations, one naturally experiences confusion and bewilderment.

The natural response of an average human being towards suffering is to identify its cause beyond oneself. Indeed no one desires suffering, and generally no sensible person acts to suffer, but when suffering comes nonetheless, one tends to blame its immediate cause. For instance, Uttama, the brother of the most famous King Dhruva, was killed by a Yakṣa. Considering the Yakṣas offenders, Dhruva attacked them and started killing them to avenge his brother's death.

We often hear that we reap the results of our own actions: the pleasant and unpleasant experiences in our life are consequences of our own deeds. Most people generally tend to take credit for their success and conveniently believe that their happiness is due to their own good work. But when one's actions produce unintended results, one thinks, "Is it really due to my action?"

Even religious people and devotees who believe that God is the cause of everything also get bewildered in suffering. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "In case of benefit, no one will deny that it is God-sent, but in case of loss or reverses one becomes doubtful about how the Lord could be so unkind to His devotee as to put him in great difficulty." (1.17.22 P)

What are the Expert Opinions?

Different philosophers identify the cause of suffering in various ways. Once Mahārāja Parīkṣit, the great emperor of the world, saw a lowborn man dressed as a king, beating a bull and a cow. He is actually the personality of Kali, the current age of quarrel and hypocrisy. The bull is Dharma, the personality of religion, and the cow is Dhara, the personality of earth. Parīkṣit, being a responsible king, immediately wanted to kill Kali for his heinous deed of torturing the cow and the bull, which are like our mother and father. However, he wanted to get a statement of accusation against Kali, so, he inquired from the bull about the perpetrator.





Dharma then replied, “It is very difficult to ascertain the particular miscreant who has caused our sufferings, because we are bewildered by all the different opinions of philosophers.” Dharma continued:

*kecid vikalpa-vasanā āhur ātmānam ātmanah
daivam anye 'pare karma svabhāvam apare prabhum*

“Some of the philosophers, who deny all sorts of duality, declare that one’s own self is responsible for his personal happiness and distress. Others say that superhuman powers are responsible, while yet others say that activity is responsible, and the gross materialists maintain that nature is the ultimate cause.” (SB 1.17.19)

Thus different philosophers declare different causes of suffering namely – self (*ātma*), superhuman powers (*daiva*), one’s actions (*karma*) and nature (*svabhāva*).

Who is the Real Cause?

Such explanations about the cause of suffering may not be incorrect, but they are certainly incomplete, for they do not recognize the sanction of the Supreme Lord, which is the ultimate cause of all causes.

Although the symptoms of a disease indicate an immediate cause, an expert physician traces out the root cause. Painkiller may relieve the immediate physical pain, but proper diagnosis and medication are needed to *treat* the patient. A mature person tries to identify the cause behind the immediate cause, and thus traces out the ultimate cause of the misery.

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “Although the bull and the cow knew perfectly well that the personality of Kali was the direct cause of their sufferings, still, as devotees of the Lord, they knew well also that without the sanction of the Lord no one could inflict trouble upon them. Thus even if the devotees see the mischief-mongers, they do not accuse them for the sufferings inflicted. They take it for granted that the mischief-monger is made to act by some indirect cause, and therefore they tolerate the sufferings, thinking them to be God-given in small doses, for otherwise the sufferings should have been greater.” (SB 1.17.18 P)

Thus the bull says: “*apratarkyād anirdeśyād iti keṣv api niścayaḥ* – There are also some thinkers who believe that no one can ascertain the cause of distress by argumentation, nor know it by imagination, nor express it by words.” This cause that cannot be ascertained actually indicates the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is inconceivable to ordinary mortals.



When Dhruva attacked the Yakṣas, at one point, he became so outrageous that he started annihilating the entire race of Yakṣas. Then Dhruva’s grandfather, Svāyambhuva Manu came and advised him, “Please understand that the Supreme Lord, who has inconceivable energies, is the cause of all causes. The Yakṣas are not the killers of your brother, because the Supreme Lord is the ultimate cause of birth and death.”

Blame Leads to More Blame

If we blame the immediate or intermediate causes of our suffering, without maturely understanding the ultimate cause, we only find ourselves entangled in the process of blaming. Because one’s blaming inspires others to blame and this contagious blame game expands to multiple people for a long time.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam presents the story of Avanti *brahmaṇa* to teach how one should tolerate the disturbances of evil persons. Harsh words pierce the heart more severely than arrows. Avanti *brāhmaṇa*, considered them to be simply the consequences of his own deeds and tolerated them soberly. Previously he had been a greedy, angry and miserly agriculturalist and merchant. However, in due course of time, he lost his wealth and was abandoned by everyone. Thus he developed a deep sense of renunciation and began to see Kṛṣṇa’s hand in his life and did not blame anyone outside himself for his sufferings. He said:





*nāyaṁ jano me sukha-duḥkha-hetur
na devatātmā graha-karma-kālāḥ
manaḥ paraṁ kāraṇam āmananti
saṁsāra-cakraṁ parivartayed yat*

“These people are not the cause of my happiness and distress. Neither are the demigods, my own body, the planets, my past work, or time. Rather, it is the mind alone that causes happiness and distress and perpetuates the rotation of material life.” (11.23.42)

It's inevitable! Try to endure!

A mature person understands that we are not the controllers of our destiny despite our desires, but we are actually controlled by some higher powers. The *Bhāgavatam* reveals to us this deeper secret of life:

*sukham aindriyakam rājan svarge naraka eva ca
dehinām yad yathā duḥkham. tasmān neccheta tad-budhaḥ*

“The embodied living entity automatically experiences unhappiness in heaven or hell. Similarly, happiness will also be experienced, even without one's seeking it. Therefore a person of intelligent discrimination does not make any endeavor to obtain such material happiness.” (11.8.1)

Lord Kṛṣṇa suggests Arjuna to tolerate the inevitable dualities with equanimity to be eligible for liberation.

*mātrā-sparsās tu kaunteya śītoṣṇa-sukha-duḥkha-dāḥ
āgamāpāyino 'nityās tāṁs titikṣasva bhārata*

“O son of Kuntī, the nonpermanent appearance of happiness and distress, and their disappearance in due course, are like the appearance and disappearance of winter and summer seasons. They arise from sense perception, O scion of Bharata, and one must learn to tolerate them without being disturbed.” (BG 2.14)

Thus a devotee gratefully accepts the will of the Supreme Lord, endures the reversals in life, as Lord Brahmā says in the following verse:

*tat te 'nukampām su-samīkṣamāṇo
bhuñjāna evātma-kṛtām vipākam
hṛd-vāg-vapurbbhir vidadhan namas te
jīveta yo mukti-pade sa dāya-bhāk*

“My dear Lord, one who earnestly waits for You to bestow Your causeless mercy upon him, all the while patiently suffering the reactions of his past misdeeds and offering You respectful obeisances with his heart, words and body, is surely eligible for liberation, for it has become his rightful claim.” (10.14.8)

Mature Vision and Responsible Action

One needs to maturely understand that without the sanction of Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa, not a blade of grass moves. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “A devotee's conclusion is that no one is directly responsible for being a benefactor or mischief-monger without the sanction of the Lord; therefore he does not consider anyone to be directly responsible for such action. But in both the cases he takes it for granted that either benefit or loss is God-sent, and thus it is His grace. Jesus Christ was seemingly put into such great difficulty, being crucified by the ignorant, but he was never angry at the mischief-mongers. That is the way of accepting a thing, either favorable or unfavorable. By God's grace, the devotee tolerates all reverses. A devotee has no suffering at all because so-called suffering is also God's grace for a devotee who sees God in everything.” (1.17.22 P)

Yet, on a human plane, one needs to responsibly identify the intermediate cause(s) of one's suffering and address the situation appropriately according to the time, place and circumstances. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “Dhruva Mahārāja was the king, and when his brother was unceremoniously killed, it was his duty to take revenge against the Yakṣas (4.10.4 P).”

This act of Dhruva befits his position as a king who needs to punish miscreants and as a devotee who has feelings for near and dear ones. However, in the name of responsibility, one shouldn't unduly get caught up in the external details of the situations losing focus on the Supreme will. Therefore, when Dhruva became excessively angry and tried to kill so many Yakṣas for one Yakṣa's mistake, Manu came and stopped him.

Suffering is inevitable in this world, and that is how this material realm is made by the Supreme Lord. But by understanding that it is sanctioned by the Supreme Lord for our own purification and learning to tolerate it with a forgiving heart, while responsibly acting according to the divine teachings, one can transcend this world of suffering. The *Bhāgavatam* promises us that it relieves us of the threefold miseries in this world (*tāpa-trayonmūlanam*). Actually *Bhāgavatam* doesn't solve our health problems, financial problems and so on literally, but the *Bhāgavatam* equips our consciousness with the necessary strength to see Kṛṣṇa's merciful hand behind those miseries, by inspiring us to take shelter of the process of *bhakti*. When 'misery' is maturely seen as 'mercy' of God, where is the question of suffering? ☀





DIFFICULTIES OF DEVOTEES



The *Bhāgavatam* also presents several episodes of pure devotees who experienced undue difficulties that they actually don't deserve. For instance, the Pāṇḍavas and their mother Kuntī underwent terrible reversals even when Lord Kṛṣṇa is present as their direct well-wisher. Their grandson Parīkṣit Mahārāja was cursed by a *brāhmaṇa* to die in seven days for an insignificant offense he committed. Another great devotee Citraketu Mahārāja was cursed by mother Pārvatī, to become a demon for criticizing Lord Śiva, although with a genuine concern. Bharata Mahārāja, an exalted devotee had to take birth as a deer in his next life for his attachment to a deer. Prahlāda Mahārāja, a five-year-old devotee of Lord Viṣṇu, was put into innumerable death threats by his own father.

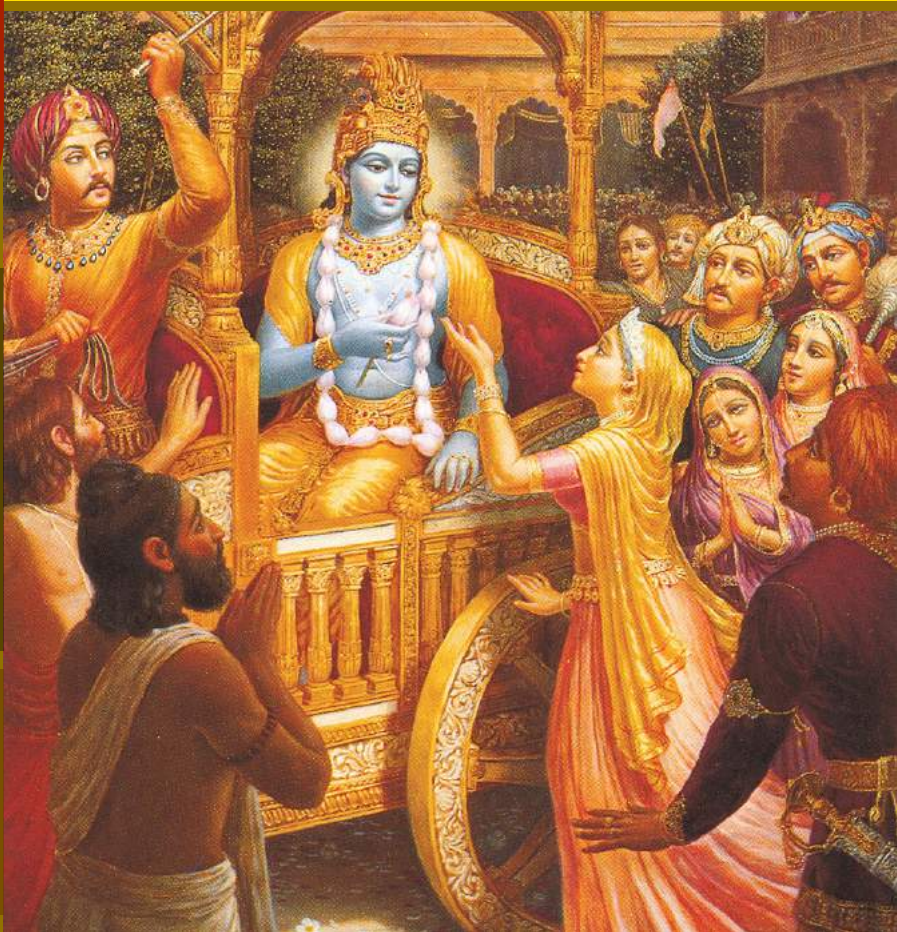
These difficulties underwent by great devotees actually reveal to the world their exalted devotional consciousness and dependence on Lord Kṛṣṇa under any circumstances. Without such difficulties, a common man cannot really appreciate their exemplary dedication to the Supreme Lord. Further, these difficulties are actually temporary phases in their eternal life of devotion, intending to give us lessons of determination, tolerance, humility, forgiveness and so on. Those difficulties are ultimately ordained by the Supreme Lord to purify those devotees of the minute traces of contamination, if any. One shouldn't misunderstand the apparent sufferings of advanced devotees as indifference of the Supreme Lord towards them or inefficacy of the process of devotional service unto Him. ☀

LET THERE BE
MORE
CALAMITIES!

vipadaḥ santu tāḥ śāśvat
tatra tatra jagad-guro
bhavato darśanam yat syād
apunar bhava-darśanam
(SB 1.8.25)

I wish that all those calamities would happen again and again so that we could see You again and again, for seeing You means that we will no longer see repeated births and deaths.

VERSE OF THE MONTH



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As a materialist is always thoughtful about improving his material condition, a devotee's thoughts should always be engaged in improving his condition in Kṛṣṇa consciousness; therefore he should be a muni. (SB 3.27.8 P)



Question: How can one practically avoid the false, bodily concept of life?

Answer: The conditioned souls are eager to identify with the body and consider that the body is "myself" and that anything in relationship with the body or possessions of the body is "mine." In Sanskrit this is called *aham-mamatā*, and it is the root cause of all conditional life.

A person should see things as the combination of matter and spirit. He should distinguish between the nature of matter and the nature of spirit, and his real identification should be with spirit, not with matter. By this knowledge, one should avoid the false, bodily concept of life. (SB 3.27.9 P)

Question: What are the various stages in sannyāsa, the renounced order?

Answer: In *sannyāsa*, the renounced order, there are four stages—*kuṭīcaka*, *bahūdaka*, *parivrājakācārya* and *paramahansa*. (SB 5.1.27 P)

According to the Vedic system, when one accepts the renounced order, he stays outside his village in a cottage, and his necessities, especially his food, are supplied from home. This is called the *kuṭīcaka* stage.

When a *sannyāsi* advances further, he no longer accepts anything from home: instead, he collects his necessities, especially his food, from many places. This system is called *mādhukarī*, which literally means "the profession of the bumblebees." As bumblebees collect honey from many flowers, a little from each, so a *sannyāsi* should beg from door to door but not accept very much food from any particular house; he should collect a little bit from every house. This is called the *bahūdaka* stage.

PARI PRAŚNA

When a *sannyāsi* is still more experienced, he travels all over the world to preach the glories of Lord Vāsudeva. He is then known as *parivrājakācārya*.

The *sannyāsi* reaches the *paramahansa* stage when he finishes his preaching work and sits down in one place, strictly for the sake of advancing in spiritual life. An actual *paramahansa* is one who completely controls his senses and engages in the unalloyed service of the Lord.

Question: What is the ultimate goal of life?

Answer: The Sanskrit word for the ultimate goal of life is *puruṣārtha*. In SB 4.9.17, Dhruva Mahārāja addresses Lord as *puruṣārtha-mūrti*, the personification of the ultimate goal of life.

Generally *puruṣārtha* is taken to mean execution of a type of religious principle or worship of God (*dharma*) in order to get material benediction (*artha*). Prayers for material benediction are intended for satisfying the senses (*kāma*). And when one is frustrated and cannot fully satisfy the senses in spite of all endeavor, he desires liberation (*mokṣa*), or freedom from material existence. These activities are generally called *puruṣārtha*. But actually the ultimate goal is to understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This is called *pañcama-puruṣārtha*, the ultimate goal of life.

Mail us at pradipika@vidyapitha.in your questions on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Answers to shortlisted questions shall be published in the next issue of Bhāgavata Pradīpikā.

QUIZ CORNER

Suggest an ATTRACTIVE CAPTION for this image



Mail your caption to pradipika@vidyapitha.in with "July Quiz Corner" in the subject. The best caption(s) along with the your name will be published in the next issue.



Best captions for the last month's image:

Kṛṣṇa, The center of Attraction
(By Pritam De)

Let's together hear nectarean Kṛṣṇa-katha my dear; and alleviate all envy, anxiety & fear!
(By Pranjal)



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The relationship between the Lord and human beings is something like that between the father and the son; the father is always anxious for the welfare of the son, even though the son forgets or neglects the father. (SB 4.22.42 P)



Just as springtime in the present indicates the nature of springtimes in the past and future, so this life of happiness, distress or a mixture of both gives evidence concerning the religious and irreligious activities of one's past and future lives. (SB 6.1.47)



By the inclination to serve the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord, suffering humanity can immediately cleanse the dirt which has accumulated in their minds during innumerable births. Like the Ganges water, which emanates from the toes of the lotus feet of the Lord, such a process immediately cleanses the mind, and thus spiritual or Kṛṣṇa consciousness gradually increases. (SB 4.21.31 P)



As a sleeping person acts according to the body manifested in his dreams and accepts it to be himself, so one identifies with his present body, which he acquired because of his past religious or irreligious actions, and is unable to know his past or future lives. (SB 6.1.49 P)

ANALOGY ARENA

Only a rare person who has adopted complete, unalloyed devotional service to Kṛṣṇa can uproot the weeds of sinful actions with no possibility that they will revive. He can do this simply by discharging devotional service, just as the sun can immediately dissipate fog by its rays. (SB 6.1.15 P)

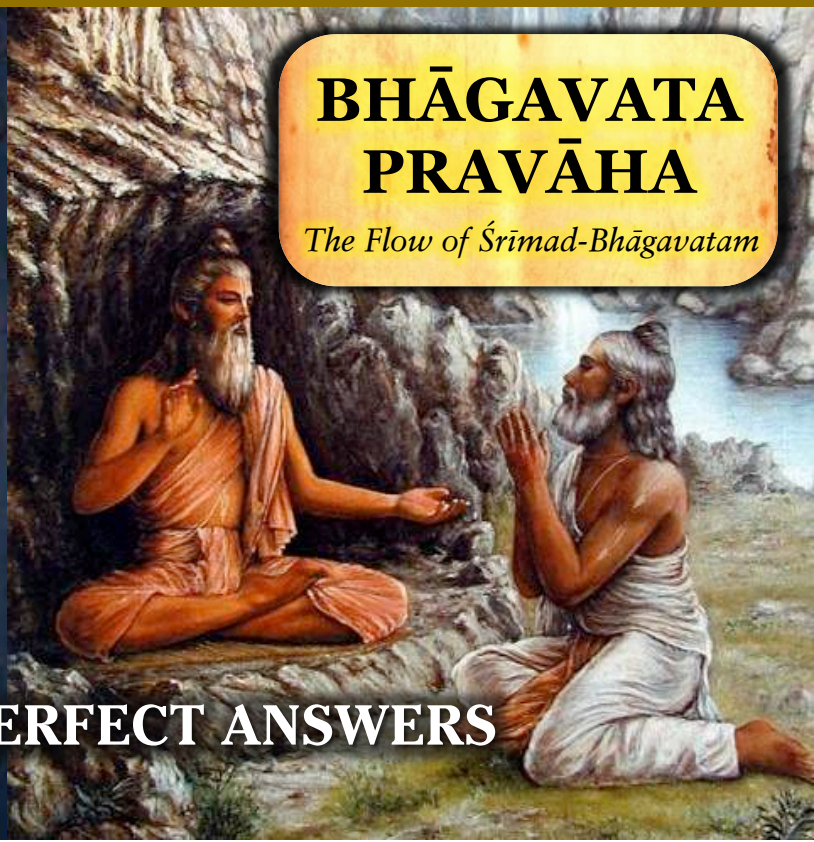


The Vedic promises of elevation to higher planets for a better standard of materialistic life are compared to flowery language because in a flower there is certainly an aroma but that aroma does not last for a very long time. In a flower there is honey, but that honey is not eternal. (SB 4.2.25 P)



Just as the driver of a bullock cart ties ropes through the nostrils of his bulls to control them, the Supreme Personality of Godhead binds all men through the ropes of His words in the Vedas, which set forth the names and activities of the distinct orders of human society [brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya and śūdra]. (SB 6.3.13 P)





BHĀGAVATA PRAVĀHA

The Flow of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam

PERFECT QUESTIONS & PERFECT ANSWERS

[Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Canto 3 Chapters 7-9]

Taking clue from the process of creation already described by Maitreya Ṛṣi, Vidura places more questions before him, being grateful for his merciful enlightenment (3.7). Maitreya Ṛṣi enthusiastically answers Vidura's queries. He describes the birth of Brahmā, his ignorance of the cause of his birth, his tapasya, revelation of Lord's form, Brahmā's prayer for creative impetus and Lords merciful empowerment on him. (3.8-9)

Inquiries About Īśvara and Jīva

Having heard how the Lord created the universes by glancing over the material nature, which consists of the three modes, Vidura felt inquisitive and further asked Maitreya, "How the Supreme Lord could be connected to the three modes, since He is spiritual and transcendental? How can the Lord who is unchangeable perform actions that indicate change? Why does the self-satisfied Lord create, maintain and destroy the universe by His *māyā-śakti*? How does the pure soul engage in nescience and suffer, inspite of Lord's presence in the heart as Paramātmā?" In this way, Vidura requested Maitreya to answer his questions and clear up his greatly illuded mind.

Maitreya satisfies Vidura

Maitreya first refuted the illogical statements that could be put forward by someone about the Lord. He said, "How can the Lord be overcome by modes if He is spiritual! To say that the Supreme Lord is overcome by illusion and yet He is unconditioned is against all logic. He is not connected to the three modes. He creates, maintains and annihilates the complete cosmic manifestation by the agency of the demigods and by using His energies." Maitreya then answered the inquiries related to the jīva. He said,

"Distress of living entity is due to misidentification alone. There is no factual background to it, just as one sees one's head cut off in a dream. As the moon reflected on water appears to tremble, the self similarly appears to have quality of matter on misidentification. This misconception can be diminished if one takes to devotional service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Simply by chanting and hearing about Him, one can achieve cessation of unlimited miserable conditions, then what to speak of those who have attraction for serving Him." Feeling himself obliged, Vidura expressed his heartfelt gratitude to Maitreya for enlightening him with this knowledge. He said that persons with meagre austerities can hardly obtain the service of pure devotees like Maitreya and thus he considered himself very fortunate.

Further inquiries by Vidura

Taking clue from the process of creation which was already described by Maitreya, Vidura requested him to explain about *sarga*, *visarga* and *manvantara*. He asked about a variety of subject matters - different planets, their situation and measurement; categories of living entities, their generations and subdivisions; *Guṇa-avatāras* and pastimes of the Lord; *varṇāśrama*, great sages and Vedic divisions; *yoga*, *yajña*, *jñāna* and



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When a person is advanced in spiritual consciousness or Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he naturally becomes very sympathetic toward all living entities suffering in the material world. (SB 5.8.9 P)



Nārada Pañcarātra,; four *puruṣārtha*, rules for profession and punishment; death rites, constellation arrangement and divisions of time. And finally how to satisfy the Supreme Lord. Vidura declared his confidence on Maitreya by saying knowledge of devotional service is impossible to attain without a guru. Thus enlivened by Vidura's questions Maitreya began to narrate *bhagavat-kathā*.

The Reawakening of Creation

Maitreya Ṛṣi described how the Srimad-Bhāgavatam descended in paramparā. Initially Lord Saṅkarṣaṇa spoke this great knowledge to sage Sanat-kumāra. Sanat-kumāra, in turn, explained it to Sāṅkhyāyana Muni. Parāśara and Bṛhaspati both heard it from Sāṅkhyāyana Muni and Maitreya heard it from his spiritual master sage Parāśara. Maitreya then described the reawakening of creation after the end of night of Brahmā. Lord contained within Himself all living entities and laid down for 1000 *yuga* cycles and glanced on the subtle bodies of living entities within Him. By His *kāla-śakti*, they started to develop their fruitive activities. Agitated by Lord's glance with the mode of passion, the subtle subject matter of creation sprouted out of His abdomen and took the shape of lotus bud and illuminated everything like the sun. Brahmā took birth from the centre of the lotus. He could not see anything. He could not understand the lotus, the creation or himself. He entered the lotus stem, but could not trace out the root. Giving up his unsuccessful search, he came back to the top and meditated on the Lord for hundred human years.

Beautiful Darśana of Lord

Brahmā could now see on the water, the gigantic body of Śeṣa-nāga upon which the Lord was lying alone. His bodily lustre mocked the beauty of the coral mountain. His limbs with ornaments mocked the beauty of mountain with waterfalls, herbs, etc. His splendorous moonlike toenails appeared like the petals of a flower. The Lord acknowledged the service of His devotees with His beautiful smile that vanquished their distress. His yellow cloth resembled the saffron dust of *kadamba*. His waist was decorated by a well decorated belt. His chest was decorated by *Śrīvatsa* and an unlimitedly valuable necklace. Brahma could now see the lake in Lord's navel, and the lotus flower, as well as the devastating flower, the drying air and the sky. Being surcharged with mode of passion, Lord Brahmā began to offer his respectful prayers for empowerment to carry on with his service of creation.

Brahmā's Prayers for Creative Impetus

Brahmā glorified the Lord as the Supreme knowable object having the most auspicious form. He said, "You are never separated from the devotees' heart who smell through their earholes, the aroma of Your lotus feet. Those who have lost their intelligence due to offences turn against the auspicious topics related to You and thus remain unfortunate. What to speak of the *karmis* who engage in distressful work, even *jñānīs* continue in *samsāra*, if they are averse to Your topics." Brahmā submits his request to the Lord, "Please empower me with the introspection to create. Please protect me so that I do not get materially affected by the false pride of being the creator. May I not get deviated from the vibration of the Vedic hymns. Please save me. O Lord, You are the Supreme, the oldest and unlimitedly merciful, smilingly bestow Your benediction by opening Your lotus eyes." In this way, Having heard the intention of Brahmā, who was anxious for creation, Lord spoke in deep, thoughtful words.

The Lord's Benediction to Brahmā

Do not be anxious and depressed about the execution of creation. By situating yourself in penance you will receive my favour and thus understand within your heart, everything regarding creation. Since your mind is fixed on Me, the vicious mode of *rajo-guṇa* will not bind you. While you entered the stem of the lotus searching for Me, I manifested My form from within you. Your prayers, penances and firm faith in Me, are by My causeless mercy alone. As I am the Lord of all benediction, I will fulfil all the desires of one who prays regularly like you, and thus worships Me. By following my instructions you can now generate the living entities as before, by the body composed of vedic wisdom. After thus instructing Brahmā the primeval Lord disappeared.

To be continued..



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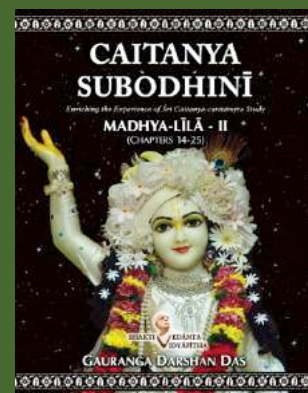
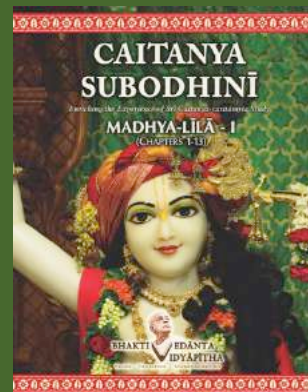
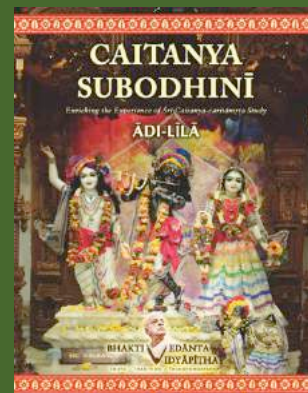
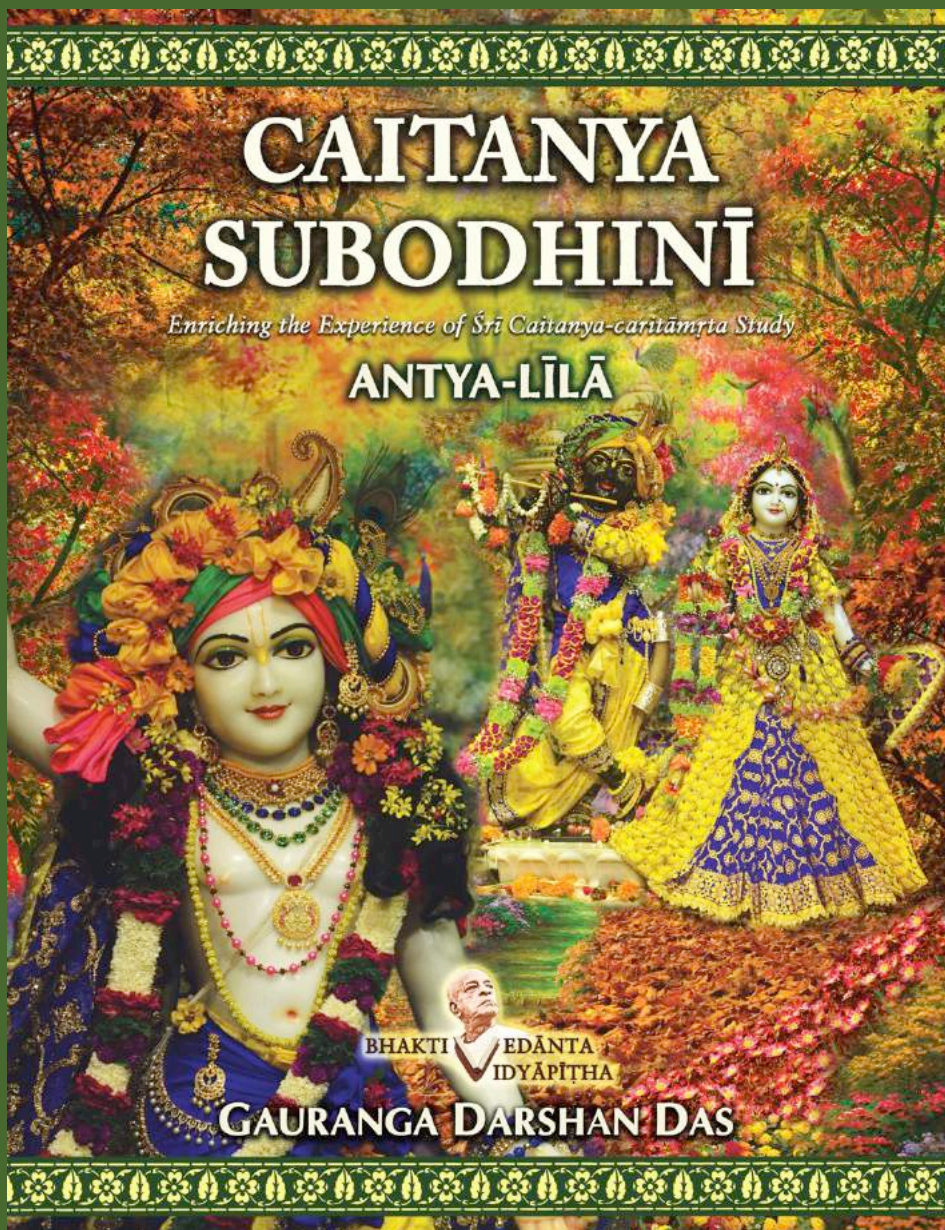
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NOMENCLATURE

SB: Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam

CC: Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta

BG: Bhagavad-gītā

BS: Brahma-saṁhitā

1.1.1: Canto 1, Chapter 1, Verse 1

1.1.1 P: From Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport to SB 1.1.1 (If it is beyond Canto 10 Chapter 13, it is from the purport of Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples)

1.1.1 V: From Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's commentary on SB 1.1.1.

PUBLISHED BY

Bhaktivedānta Vidyāpīṭha Research Center, ISKCON Govardhan Eco Village (GEV), Galtare, Hamrapur (P.O.), Wada (Taluka), Palghar (District), Maharashtra, India, 421303.

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Bask in the Illumination of the Bhāgavatam

A Video on CAITANYA SUBODHINI,
A Systematic Study Guide for Sri Caitanya Caritamrita

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oPzlvL7Hp04>